



Southeast Fishery Bulletin

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Reminder: South Atlantic Rock Shrimp Vessel Operator Permit Cards Required in South Atlantic Federal Waters off Florida/Georgia/North Carolina/South Carolina Starting on May 16, 2003

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) is issuing this reminder that, effective May 16, 2003, you must possess an operator permit card issued by NOAA Fisheries' Southeast Region in order to operate a vessel fishing for rock shrimp in the South Atlantic Federal waters off Florida/Georgia/South Carolina/North Carolina (South Atlantic Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)) or possess rock shrimp in or from the South Atlantic EEZ, or operate a vessel that has a valid permit for South Atlantic rock shrimp. The operator permit card requirement is part of the final rule published in the Federal Register on January 16, 2003.

Operator Permit Cards

As indicated above, effective May 16, 2003, operator permit cards issued by NOAA Fisheries' Southeast Region will be required for any person operating a vessel fishing for rock shrimp in the South Atlantic EEZ or to possess rock shrimp in or from the South Atlantic EEZ, or to be an operator of a vessel that has a valid permit for South Atlantic rock shrimp. In addition to the operator permit, the individual must carry one other form of identification, such as a driver's license. All such vessels will be required to have at least one such licensed operator on board in the EEZ starting May 16, 2003. NOAA Fisheries' Permits Team has mailed applications for operator permit cards to South Atlantic rock shrimp vessel owners. Please contact the Permits Team at 727-570-5326 if you still need an operator permit card application.

Information required on the operator permit card application includes the applicant's name, address, and other identifying information, such as date of

birth, height, weight, hair and eye color. Also, an applicant is required to provide two recent (no more than one year old) color, passport-sized photographs. **The operator permit card administrative fee of \$50 is separate from the vessel permit/endorsement application administrative fee(s).** The operator permit card will be valid for a period of three years.

Update on Rock Shrimp Vessel Permits, Including Limited Access Rock Shrimp Endorsements

Effective July 15, 2003, a limited access rock shrimp endorsement will be required onboard a vessel to fish for or possess rock shrimp in the South Atlantic EEZ off Georgia and off Florida. Initially, NOAA Fisheries will issue limited access endorsements to owners of vessels that had valid Federal permits for South Atlantic rock shrimp on or before December 31, 2000, and that had landings of rock shrimp from the South Atlantic of at least 15,000 pounds during any one of the calendar years 1996 through 2000. Vessels that had Federal permits for South Atlantic rock shrimp will be identified solely from NOAA Fisheries' records. Claimed landings will be verified from landings data in state or Federal data bases provided the landings were submitted on or before January 31, 2001.

For initial eligibility purposes, the owner of a vessel that had a permit for South Atlantic rock shrimp during the qualifying period retained the rock shrimp landings record of that vessel during the time of his/her ownership. Exception to this policy would occur only if **prior to the publication of the final rule (January 16, 2003)** the sale of a vessel included a written agreement stating that credit for those qualifying landings was transferred to a new owner. The Permits Team notified each owner of a vessel that

had a South Atlantic rock shrimp permit on or before December 31, 2000, and each owner of a currently permitted vessel of its initial determination of eligibility in March 2003. If you believe that you are eligible for an endorsement but have not yet received such notification, please contact the Permits Team at 727-570-5326.

Applications for endorsements must be postmarked or hand-delivered to the Permits Team no later than the May 16, 2003, deadline. You must submit an application, even if it is incomplete, to the Permits Team by this deadline, so that you can appeal any initial ineligibility determination.

For a person aboard a vessel to fish for rock shrimp in the South Atlantic EEZ (i.e., from the Virginia/North Carolina border through the Florida East coast) a commercial vessel permit for rock shrimp must be issued to the vessel and must be on board. This is the permit that has been required since 1996 and is called the “open access” permit. Every vessel owner must continue to renew the “open access” permit regardless of whether or not he/she obtains an endorsement to fish in the “limited access” area which is in the EEZ off Georgia and the east coast of Florida. **If you already have a valid rock shrimp “open access” permit on your vessel and you intend to obtain the “limited access” endorsement, you do not need to re-apply for the “open access” permit at this time. However, you must renew the “open access” permit at the appropriate time; otherwise, you will not be able to fish for rock shrimp.** Renewal information will be sent to you approximately 60 days before expiration of the “open access” permit. If you

wish to fish in the open access area (i.e., in the EEZ off North Carolina and South Carolina) and you do not have an open access rock shrimp permit on your vessel, you may apply for the open access permit at this time (please check South Atlantic Rock Shrimp under the Commercial Permits Section of the application).

If you have any further questions concerning what and when you need to apply for limited access, please contact the SERO Permits Team at 727-570-5326, Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. through 4:30 p.m.

Reminder of Key Permitting Implementation Dates

May 16, 2003 - Operator permit cards required (see details above).

May 16, 2003 - Applications for rock shrimp limited access endorsements must be postmarked or hand-delivered to the SERO permit office.

July 15, 2003 - Limited Access Rock Shrimp Endorsement required to possess or land rock shrimp from the South Atlantic EEZ off Georgia or off Florida.

This and other news releases are available on the SERO homepage at <http://caldera.sero.nmfs.gov>. To obtain considerable recorded information about our missions, services, and management measures, call our toll free public service line at 1-866-570-5301. If the information you need is not available on that line, you can leave us a message and we'll get back to you within one business day. NOAA Fisheries is an agency of the Commerce Department's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.